for the new patented drugs, special schemes for people below poverty line, introduction of Rajasthan Model of Life Line Fluid Stores (hospital pharmacy stores run by Medicare Societies) for bulk purchase of drugs directly from manufacturers and selling them at reduced prices, compounding of offences under the Essential Commodities Act, establishment of DPCO cells in all States on the model of Karnataka, efforts to increase public awareness, wide publicity to policies and decisions of the Government and NPPA etc.

(c) 74 bulk drugs specified in the First Schedule of Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995 (DPCO 1995) and the formulations based thereon are under price control. Prices of non-Scheduled formulations are fixed by the manufacturers themselves, however, the Government takes corrective measures when public interest is found to be adversely affected. A system of monitoring prices of these drugs is followed by NPPA and wherever the increase in prices is higher than the limits fixed by the NPPA, corrective action to reduce the same is taken. Moreover, recently the Government have imposed excise duty on the MRP of medicines giving abatement of 35% *vide* Notification No.2/2005-Central Excise (N.T.) dated the 7th January, 2005 which has been increased to 40% *vide* Notification No. 4/2005-Central Excise (N.T.) dated the 23rd February, 2005. This is likely to have an impact on the profit and trade margins for various drugs.

Agricultural growth target

†*68. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY:
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that only1.5 per cent growth has been achieved as against the target of 4 per cent in agriculture;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take for increasing agricultural production?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) According to the data released by Central Statistical Organization (CSO)], the growth rate in agriculture, including allied sectors for forestry and logging, and fishing, was negative (-7%) in 2002-2003 while it was 9.6% in 2003-2004. According to advance estimates released by the CSO, growth rate in agricluture, including allied sectors, in 2004-05 is 1.1%. The average annual growth rate for the first three years of the Tenth Plan works out to 1.2%.

(b) Since about 60 per cent of the net sown area is rain-fed, agricultural production is heavily influenced by rainfall. The year 2002-03 witnessed a severe drought that affected several States in the country. The favourable rainfall from the southwest monsoon in 2003-04 boosted agricultural production. However, the rainfall from the south-west monsoon in the year 2004-05 was deficient across time and space. Though the deficiency in rainfall from the south-west monsoon in 2004 was less serious than that in 2002 both for the whole season and for the agriculturally important month of July, the kharif crop production in 2004-05 was adversely affected by deficient rainfall.

(c) With a view to increasing agricultural production, the Government have identified thrust areas for focused and priority attention, which include agricultural credit, irrigation, horticulture, and marketing reforms. The Union Budget for 2005-06 has underscored the importance of efforts aimed at turning the focus of commercial banks, regional rural banks and co-operative banks towards providing credit, especially production credit, to farm households. The other areas highlighted in the Budget include micro irrigation technology comprising drip and sprinkler irrigation, National Horiticulture Mission with focus on backward and forward linkages, and development/strengthening of agricultural marketing infrastructure, grading and standardization.

Safe blood to AIDS patients

*69. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal under consideration to provide safe and quality blood to the patients under the National AIDS Control Programme;